



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

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## Fire Island National Seashore News Release

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### Increased Vigilance for West Nile Virus on Fire Island WNV Detected in One Mosquito Sample Collected at Watch Hill



Biological technician in protective suit collects mosquitoes from both gravid traps (left) and light traps (right) that have been set up at appropriate study sites within Fire Island National Seashore.



Back in the lab, a park biologist empties the traps, examines and sorts the mosquitoes by species, then properly packages the samples ("pools") and sends them to Suffolk County Department of Health Services for examination.

*NPS Photos*

*(more)*

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The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

Fire Island National Seashore announced today that a sample of mosquitoes infected with West Nile Virus (WNV) has been found within Fire Island National Seashore at the Watch Hill employee housing area, near the Watch Hill Marina. No WNV-infected dead birds have been found in this area or in other parts of the park. The National Park Service collected the mosquitoes on August 19 from a light trap near the residential area, and sent the samples for testing. The positive results were announced by the Suffolk County Department of Health Services on September 7.

The National Park Service works closely with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), Suffolk County Vector Control, and local Fire Island and Long Island municipalities to determine the best course of action to protect residents, visitors and employees of the Seashore. When threats to human health (such as the presence of West Nile Virus) occur, actions to protect the public may include control methods such as applying larvicide or spraying, if the situation warrants such a response. The public will be notified 24 hours in advance of any spray event. Information on the date and exact location of any spraying can be found by calling 631-852-4939 or by checking the Suffolk County web site at [www.co.suffolk.ny.us/vector](http://www.co.suffolk.ny.us/vector). Watch Hill's neighboring community of Davis Park is routinely treated with a ground spray, next scheduled for Tuesday, September 12, applied under a letter of authorization to Suffolk County Vector Control.

The park is continuing its surveillance program to monitor the severity and extent of West Nile Virus throughout the Seashore and has increased monitoring in the area that tested positive for WNV. Mosquitoes can transmit both West Nile Virus (WNV) and Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) from an infected bird to humans and other animals. However, mosquitoes are a natural part of the Seashore's ecology. The larvae and adults provide food for many kinds of wildlife, including other insects, fish, birds, and bats. Some measures taken to control mosquito populations, such as spraying insecticides, adversely affect the health of fish and other wildlife living in the wetlands. Therefore, any actions taken to protect human health through the control of mosquitoes must be weighed very heavily, which involves professional and scientific consultation.

Residents, visitors and staff are advised to avoid mosquito-infested areas. If contact with mosquitoes is unavoidable, it is advisable to wear protective clothing and use an effective insect repellent, such as one containing at least 30% DEET. (Use much less repellent for children; DEET should not be used on children under age 3.) It is also recommended that staff, residents and visitors time their activities judiciously and try their best to stay indoors when mosquito biting levels are highest, primarily from about an hour before sunset to midnight. People most at risk of becoming ill from West Nile Virus are those over 50 years of age or whose health is impaired. Such people are advised to stay away from areas with mosquitoes.

For general information on West Nile Virus, please contact your local health department. Information can also be obtained from the [CDC](http://www.cdc.gov), [New York State](http://www.nys.gov) or [Suffolk County WNV](http://www.suffolkcountyny.gov) web sites, or one of the park visitor centers. For more information about Fire Island National Seashore's mosquito monitoring program, visit the park's web site: <http://www.nps.gov/fiis>. If you have information or questions for the park, please contact our headquarters at (631) 289-4810.

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